

## SOME "BIRD WAYS."

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All of us, no doubt, in the course of our bird-observations, have met with, or had brought to our attention, what might easily be termed incidents and, as such, the following, a trifle out of the ordinary, and perhaps worthy of recognition in some permanent form, have come to the writer's notice from time to time, either through the corroborative and reliable testimony of others or by direct observation.

To Mr. William Brewster we are indebted for much information and many valuable notes pertaining to and taken in connection with the migratory movements of birds, and in his paper on "Bird Migration" (see Memoir No. 1 of the Nuttall Ornithological Club) he has called attention to the peculiarities sometimes indulged in by migrants when approaching the lighted lantern of a light-house during a night flight—peculiarities, it may be said, when the conditions were peculiarly favorable; i. e., "during densely cloudy or foggy weather." Fluttering about inspecting it timidly, or even striking it gently. Others, more impetuous, would strike the lantern with full force, thus ending their careers then and there, or disabling themselves hopelessly, while others still would strike with slighter force, flutter down upon the platform of the lantern in a dazed and exhausted condition, but after resting for a time would take wing and disappear in the darkness. A percentage of the latter, however, returning and striking the light *again* and *always* harder the second time than at first. The bewildering and fascinating effect that a light will sometimes have upon these nocturnal migrants was very clearly illustrated to the writer some years ago, occurring here at Glen Ellyn on the night of April 16, 1893, being related to me at the time by a neighbor friend.

On the night mentioned, which previously had been somewhat showery during the evening, a Kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*, appeared at one of the east windows of my neighbor's house, and in which a lighted lamp had been placed. It fluttered against the glass for some time and could not be induced to leave even after repeated efforts had been made from within to drive it away. Finally the door on the same side of the building was opened, when in flew the bird. It was caught and placed in a cage, appearing very much exhausted and bewildered for a time, but soon became uneasy; its violent actions convincing my friend that its

release would be preferable to captivity, and accordingly it was set at liberty out of doors, the lamp still remaining in its original position. The bird returned at once to the window, fluttered about as before, and continued to do so until the light was removed, when it disappeared in the darkness. The building in this instance, the temporary abode of my neighbor, was an old unpainted affair—a shanty, in reality—situated in a hollow, its outlines being scarcely discernible to the passer-by on any dark night. These facts are considered worth mentioning as they doubtless have some bearing on the case. The date of the bird's arrival here is also unusual, being about a fortnight ahead of the schedule time.

The next incident is in relation to a pair of Robins that started to nest on the same gentleman's premises, but in this instance a new building lately constructed. For a nesting site they had chosen the cornice-roof of a projecting-bay and had proceeded so far in their plans as to deposit one egg. At this period a number of house painters appeared upon the scene, and in cleaning up about the premises, preparatory for work, almost the first thing they did was to remove the Robins' nest from the bay, giving the egg to one of the inmates of the house and throwing the nest upon the ground. My neighbor coming home that evening found the birds in great distress and, ascertaining the cause, insisted that the nest be put back in its original place, egg and all, which was done. The following day the female Robin had taken possession of her nest, the sequel being that a brood of young was successfully hatched and reared.

Before removing to Glen Ellyn, we occupied a house well within the resident section of Chicago. In the spring of 1888 I was away from home, but the following facts were afterwards given to me by several members of our family. During early May of that year a King Rail, *Rallus elegans*, was noticed to have taken up its residence in our back yard, where it is said to have remained about a month, when some idle boy with perhaps little else to do, succeeded in crippling it with a stone, and the next morning it was picked up in the street in front of our house more dead than alive. In all probability the bird had been injured in the first place, but to what extent was not known, as it seemed to be in good condition when feeding about the lot. My people tell me that the Rail was on exceedingly pleasant terms with the several members of the house-hold, including both the dog and cats, and that it would frequently take a sun-bath in the company of the latter, something after the manner of a domestic hen, stretching its wing out over the extended leg. For food it seemed to subsist entirely on angle-worms which it caught during

the early morning hours, when it could be seen walking about the yard in quest of them. For night shelter it resorted to a wood-pile in a corner of the lot.

September 28, 1891, as my record reads, a rather unexpected occurrence took place on our premises here at Glen Ellyn. It was the advent of a young-of-the-year Prairie Chicken, *Tympanuchus americanus*, among the poultry, feeding with and following the chickens about the yard, although chanticleer and his flock did not look with marked favor on the presence of this new-comer, pecking and chasing it at every opportunity. At one time it followed several of the half-grown young into the front street, feeding with them among the horse-droppings and wholly unmindful of passing wagons and carriages. On other occasions when alone, it would fly into the top of a small mountain ash tree on our place and feed on the berries. The bird's weight upon the smaller branches would shake much of this fruit to the ground, but, having satisfied itself with that on the tree, it would fly down and clean up this fallen fruit. This it did several times. At roosting time it started to follow the poultry to their quarters and probably would have done so had the younger chickens been more quiet. But in selecting their positions for the night the noise and confusion made by them at that jostling age was altogether too much for our modest visitor, who, viewing the situation at a distance for a time, decided to take wing and return to the fields. We never saw it again. Although this immature example of the Prairie Hen appeared to be in most respects unmindful of the treacherous ways of man, never-the-less, its inherited fear of the murderous gun was quite fully demonstrated I think.

While watching the chickens going to roost, a young man of the neighborhood passed our place with a gun upon his shoulder. The hunter's appearance almost paralyzed our now timid bird which stood motionless assuming an attitude almost upright, like a stake, but dropped back into the normal position just as soon as the apparent danger had passed. In conclusion, it may be well enough to add that our flock of poultry for that season was composed chiefly of Plymouth Rocks, that fact alone accounting, perhaps, for the successful decoying of this wild representative of the fields among them, the close resemblance between them being quite marked, and certainly very deceptive in the case of half-grown pullets.

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